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Letter dated 9 April 2007 from the Permanent Representative of Belarus to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

I have the honour to inform you of the decision of the Government of the Republic of Belarus to present the candidature of Belarus to the Human Rights Council for the term 2007-2010 at the elections to be held in May 2007.

Please find enclosed the voluntary pledges and commitments of Belarus in accordance with General Assembly resolution 60/251 (see annex).

I would appreciate it if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the General Assembly under agenda item 105 (e).

(*Signed*) Andrei **Dapkiunas**

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Annex to the letter dated 9 April 2007 from the Permanent Representative of Belarus to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

Voluntary pledges and commitments of Belarus on human rights

Belarus is committed to international cooperation in the field of human rights, which is based on the principles of equitable partnership and mutually respectful dialogue.

Belarus cooperates and pledges to continue to engage constructively with the United Nations human rights mechanisms. Belarus is a party to almost all human rights instruments, including six core human rights conventions, and is committed to fulfilling its international commitments in good faith.

A firm supporter of fair and open dialogue on human rights, Belarus is firmly committed to active, constructive and transparent cooperation with special thematic human rights procedures, including the provision of all requested information.

To date, Belarus has been visited by the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, the Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers as well as the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention. The Government of Belarus has undertaken practical measures to implement recommendations made by these mandate-holders.

Belarus initiated a country visit by the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children, due to be held in 2007

Belarus is committed to making its own tangible contribution to international efforts in promoting and protecting human rights. Priority is given to addressing specific challenges but target a large number of Member States.

In 2006 the United Nations General Assembly adopted two human rights resolutions initiated by Belarus, entitled "Improving the coordination of efforts against trafficking in persons" (resolution 61/180) and "Promotion of equitable and mutually respectful dialogue on human rights" (resolution 61/166). Both entirely new, these resolutions seek to encourage better cooperation in the sphere of human rights: the first, in fighting human trafficking, the second, in preventing politicization and double standards in addressing human rights.

In a follow-up to its initiative in the General Assembly on fighting human trafficking, in March 2007 Belarus co-sponsored an international conference held at United Nations Headquarters to seek ways to improve international coordination of anti-trafficking activities. Belarus also hosted two international conferences on fighting trafficking in persons, in October 2006 and April 2007, in Minsk.

An advocate for respecting national heritage of all Member States, Belarus consistently promotes the idea of diversity in paths to development and the right of nations to determine freely their own political, economic and social systems with regard to their history, traditions and cultural values. The idea has been reflected in several international documents, including various resolutions of the General Assembly.

Sharing principles of non-interference in domestic affairs of Member States, Belarus co-initiated the resolution entitled "Promotion of peace as a vital requirement for the full enjoyment of human rights by all" (Commission on Human Rights resolution 2003/61). Adopted by the Commission on Human Rights in 2003, the resolution urges Member States to refrain from the threat or use of force against territorial integrity or political independence of any country in their international relations. The resolution seeks to strengthen international peace and security and promote friendly relations among Member States.

In supporting international efforts against racial discrimination Belarus initiated the General Assembly resolution entitled "Measures to be taken against political platforms and activities based on doctrines of superiority and violent nationalist ideologies which are based on racial discrimination or ethnic exclusiveness and xenophobia, including neo-Nazism" (see resolution 59/175). Adopted thrice since 2000, the resolution promotes respect for human rights and democratic values by rallying opposition to dangerous racist ideologies and policies.

A long-standing pledge of Belarus is to promote international cooperation on human rights based on equality and mutual respect. To that end Belarus is committed to working towards the consolidation of the status and authority of the Human Rights Council as a strong and responsible body that deliberates and takes decisions in a transparent and objective manner, free from politicization and selectivity. Priority will be given to addressing truly urgent challenges that affect a large number of Member States.

Belarus is committed to ensuring that the rights of small and medium Member States are not infringed in the process of considering human rights in the Human Rights Council.

Equitable partnership, fair and open dialogue with full respect for historic, cultural and religious heritage of Member States are key principles to which Belarus pledges its support in the Human Rights Council. A major priority for Belarus would be to facilitate, in the spirit of cooperation, the consideration of the human rights agenda.

Belarus pledges to contribute to the development of the Human Rights Council, including the review of the system of special procedures to ensure that the Council is effective and most responsive to the needs of Member States. Special attention will be given to assisting in the establishment of a system of universal periodic review that will make it possible to monitor objectively the human rights records of all Member States.

Our strong commitment is to ensure that all human rights, political, economic, social civil, cultural rights and the right to development, are equally considered in the Human Rights Council.

Belarus will strive to ensure that historic, cultural and social heritage of Member States is taken into account while considering human rights, with the view to encouraging tolerance and respect among Member States in their dialogue on human rights.

Belarus will commit itself to contributing to the ongoing reform of the United Nations treaty bodies so as to make their activities more flexible and efficient.

At the national level, Belarus will do its utmost to ensure that all international human rights instruments to which it is a party are fully observed. Belarus will continue its activities to promote and protect human rights, including social and economic rights, the rights of the child and women's rights.

Belarus is committed to further strengthening its activities in promoting gender equality and women's rights and preventing violence and discrimination against women and girls.

Belarus pledges to continue its efforts in fighting human trafficking both nationally and internationally, namely to advance better international coordination in this sphere.